

Charles Hampered by Political Difficulties. in

tribute to the power of the man who, but five years before, had been proclaimed an outlaw, and of the activity of disciples like Bugenhagen, Melancthon, Amsdorf, Justin Jonas, &c. "No Diet," said Spalatin, "has hitherto spoken so freely, so bravely, so defiantly, against pope, bishops, and clergy as this Diet of Spires." Emperor and pope seemed to have utterly lost control over the situation. The religious destiny of Germany had passed from the hands of pope and emperor to Luther and the princes. The Reichs-regiment, or central Government, could no more enforce the papal and imperial will against Luther and the princes than it could stop the current of the Rhine.

To Charles both the Recess of Spires and the assumption of the right to make it were an offence. For the present he was compelled to digest it as best he could. The union of so many crowns on one head was, after all, the real saviour of Luther. Had Charles been free to bring the vast power which his many dignities represented, to bear on the question, nothing could, humanly speaking, have prevented him from crushing the Reformation. But the very vastness of his power hindered him from making effective use of it. As King of Spain he was the rival of the King of France for predominance in Italy, and, though he had just emerged in triumph from the tremendous struggle to assert this predominance at Pavia, his success had roused the fears of the pope and estranged his ally, Henry VIII. Both Henry and the pope had consequently become his enemies, and the year following the Diet of Spires saw the sack of Rome under his auspices—a feller blow to the papal prestige than that delivered by Luther at Worms, Charles and Luther might almost pass for allies in the same cause, and under the pressure of political expediency Charles did not scruple to play off Luther against the pope, who had engineered the League of Cognac. The league immersed him once more in a struggle with his rival of France, who had only regained his freedom to disregard the terms of his deliverance and declare war. Success again rewarded the skill of the imperial generals and the superiority of his statecraft, and the success which forced both the pope and the French king to come to terms at Barcelona and Carnbrai respectively (June and August 1529) was a grave